



State of Connecticut

African-American Affairs Commission

State Capitol
210 Capitol Avenue – Room 509
Hartford, CT 06106
860-240-8555

April 15, 2013

Good afternoon Senator Coleman, Rep. Fox and members of the Judiciary Committee. My name is Glenn A. Cassis and I am the Executive Director of the African-American Affairs Commission (AAAC). The mission of the Commission is to promote and improve the economic, educational, health, safety and political well-being of the African-American community in Connecticut. The AAAC is non-partisan and provides comment on legislation to the General Assembly. I wish to submit testimony in support of **HB 6581** An Act Concerning the Recommendations of the Connecticut Sentencing Commission Regarding Lengthy Sentence for Crimes Committed by a Child or Youth and **SB 1062** An Act Concerning the Recommendations of the Connecticut Sentencing Commission Regarding the Sentencing of a Child Convicted of a Felony Offense.

Research on child and adult development affirms that the brain is not fully development before the age of 17. A child's brain lacks the ability to reason as an adult. A child should not be sentenced as an adult no matter how heinous the act. Society must be held accountable for a major portion of the act. Having said this, the justice system should do what it can to rehabilitate the youthful offender so he/she can return to society. Both bills have a rigorous procedure in place to insure that each youth serving a sentence is thoroughly reviewed by a pardon board before the sentence is reduced. Before an offender is released they will have earned a reduced sentence.

These bills will help make the judicial system fairer to people of color. In 2011 the Connecticut Office of Policy Management issued a report on racial bias in the juvenile justice system. In what it

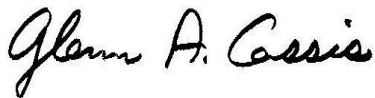
Our Mission

To improve and promote the economic development, education, health and political well-being of the African-American community in the State of Connecticut

calls the Disproportionate Minority Contact (DMC), African-American children were 2.4 times more likely to have incident reports written by police than white children. Prosecutors were more likely to transfer African-American juveniles to adult court. DCF confined African-American youth in secure facilities more often and for longer lengths than their white counterparts. These bills take an important step to help make the judicial system fairer to those who are victims to bias.

Connecticut must continue to lead the nation in correcting an injustice based on race and poverty. The Commission supports these bills and urges the Judiciary Committee for their passage.

Thanks you for accepting my testimony.

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Glenn A. Cassis". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

Glenn A. Cassis
Executive Director